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ABSTRACT

Asset mapping involves documenting tangible and intangible resources of a community viewed as a place with assets to be preserved and enhanced, not deficits to be remedied. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) are credited with developing the concept of asset-based community development (ABCD) that draws on appreciative inquiry; recognition of social capital; participatory approaches to development based on principles of empowerment and ownership; collaborative economic development models that place priority on making the best use of a community's resource base; and efforts to strengthen civil society by engaging people as citizens rather than clients. The ABCD process involves the community in making an inventory of assets and capacity, building relationships, developing a vision of the future, and leveraging internal and external resources to support actions to achieve it. Barriers to ABCD may be lack of process, lack of time, resistant agencies/professionals, or negative attitudes and fear on the part of marginalized and powerless groups. Recent projects are changing the focus from community development to community building. (Contains an annotated bibliography of 24 resources that can help adult and community educators use asset mapping for program planning.) (YLB)

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TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERT

NO. 47

by Sandra Kerka

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Community Asset Mapping

Asset mapping involves documenting the tangible and intangible resources of a community, viewing it as a place with assets to be preserved and enhanced, not deficits to be remedied. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) are credited with developing the concept of asset-based community development (ABCD), which draws on appreciative inquiry; the recognition of social capital; participatory approaches to development, which are based on principles of empowerment and ownership; collaborative economic development models that place priority on making the best use of a community's resource base; and efforts to strengthen civil society by engaging people as citizens rather than clients (Mathie and Cunningham 2002). Assets may be persons, physical structures, natural resources, institutions, businesses, or informal organizations (Berkowitz and Wadud 2003). The ABCD process involves the community in making an inventory of assets and capacity, building relationships, developing a vision of the future, and leveraging internal and external resources to support actions to achieve it (Beaulieu 2002). Asset mapping is positive, realistic (starting with what the community has), and inclusive (Guy et al. 2002).

ABCD provides an alternative to the service delivery/institutional model in which external, often government funding meant government agenda setting and less local control (Bohach 1997). Some barriers to ABCD may be lack of process (either no leader wants to assume responsibility or does not know how), lack of time, resistant agencies/professionals, or negative attitudes and fear on the part of marginalized and powerless groups (ibid.). Recent projects are changing the focus from community development to community building (Community Building Resources 1997, 1998, 2003; Flora 1997-1998). McKnight is extending ABCD into "whole community organizing," which resolves such issues as exclusion, self-interest, and the limitations of past disagreements (Aigner et al. 2002). The following resources can help adult and community educators use asset mapping for program planning.

Resources

Aigner, S. M.; Raymond, V. J.; and Smidt, L. J. "'Whole Community Organizing' for the 21st Century." ***Journal of the Community Development Society*** 33, no. 1 (2002): 86-106.
Whole-community organizing is a new approach to community change that is supported by theories of social relations and interaction. It uses an asset-based approach to community development. Empirical studies have identified ways to mobilize community assets and build community from the inside out.

Appalachia Educational Laboratory. "Community Asset Mapping." In ***Rural School Administrator's Resources***. Charleston, WV: AEL, 2000. (ED 448 970)
Discusses the importance of mapping community strengths and resources; steps in creating an asset map; and suggestions for generating a community profile, completing a community capacity inventory, and conducting a "windshield survey."

Asset-Based Community Development Institute (John McKnight and John Kretzmann, co directors), 2040 Sheridan Rd., Evanston, IL 60208-4100; 847/491-8711; fax: 847/467-4140; e-mail: abcd@northwestern.edu; http://www.northwestern.edu/IPR/abcd.html
Provides useful resources for conducting asset inventories as well as a set of 12 workbooks, including *The Organization of Hope: A Workbook for Rural Asset-Based Community Development* and *Asset-Based Strategies for Faith Communities*.

Beaulieu, L. ***Mapping the Assets of Your Community: A Key Component for Building Local Capacity. SRDC Series #227***. Mississippi State, MS: Southern Rural Development Center, 2002. http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/227/227_asset_mapping.pdf
Outlines a mapping procedure that includes a strategy for identifying a pool of community leaders and engaging people in community enhancement efforts. Includes links to the following tools: capacity inventory of individuals, community participation and leadership inventory, inventory of local institutions worksheet, group skills of volunteer organization members, and an asset mapping database.

Berkowitz, B., and Wadud, E. "Identifying Community Assets and Resources." In ***Community Tool Box***, chapter 3, section 8. Lawrence: Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development, University of Kansas, 2003. http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/section_1043.htm
Includes the following: What is a community asset? Why should you identify community assets? When should you identify community assets? How do you identify community assets? Mapping and using community assets. Provides a community capacity inventory, checklist of capacity-mapping questions, and presentation materials.

Bohach, A. "Fundamental Principles of Asset-Based Community Development." ***Journal of Volunteer Administration*** 15, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 22-29.
Summarizes the principles, characteristics, and requirements of asset-based community development and identifies critical barriers. Encourages volunteer administrators to apply current knowledge and practices to asset-based community development.

Community Building Resources. "Community Capacity Building & Asset Mapping© Philosophy." 2003. http://www.cbr-aimhigh.com/What_cbr_Does/philosophy.htm
Presents a model developed in Edmonton, Alberta. Includes descriptions of the research on which it is based and provides lists of resources for implementation.

Community Building Resources. ***Listen & Learn II***. Spruce Grove, Alberta: CBR, 1998. (ED 423 377) http://www.cbr-aimhigh.com/research_evaluation/Listen_Learn_2.htm
Six community builders in Edmonton, Alberta, planned, developed, and implemented a reflective research project in ABCD. Conclusions were as follows: (1) three key underpinnings for asset-based community building are engaging others, relationship building, and action; (2) results indicated that optimal group structure fostered an environment where the underpinnings could happen; and (3) results affirmed the elements of RAFF (Relationships, Action, Food, and Fun) that emerged from the first phase of the project.

Community Building Resources. ***Thinking about Community Capacity Building & Asset Mapping***. Spruce Grove, Alberta: CBR, 1997. (ED 414 504)
Describes the mindshift that is the key to successful community capacity building and to the development of social and economic structures that nurture local sustainability. Chapter I presents a model or path for community capacity building and asset mapping.

Community Change Education Project. ***Module 1: Asset-Based Community Development***. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Extension, 2000. http://www.uwex.edu/ces/buildingcommunity/htm_files/abcd.htm
Includes an introduction, do's and don'ts, ABCD step by step, the process and tools, and a community assessment questionnaire.

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Cunningham, G., and Mathie, A. "Asset-Based Community Development—An Overview." Paper presented at the Asset-Based Community Development Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand, February 21, 2002. http://www.synergos.org/globalphilanthropy/02/abcdoverview.htm
Explains ABCD and how it is facilitated. Outlines six steps for conducting community asset mapping.

Dedrick, A.; Mitchell, G.; Miyagawa, M.; and Roberts, S. ***From Model to Reality—Community Capacity Building and Asset Mapping©***. Edmonton, Alberta: Capital Health Authority, 1997. (ED 414 503)
A study examined how a community development model called Community Capacity Building and Asset Mapping© was used. Issues addressed included initiation of the community building effort, common elements used to find and mobilize assets, factors determining the community building effort's sustainability over time, the role of service providers, and funding needs.

Dorfman, D. ***Mapping Community Assets Workbook. Strengthening Community Education: The Basis for Sustainable Renewal***. Portland, OR: Rural Education Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998. (ED 426 499) http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/com_mapping.pdf
A process for determining assets in the individual and in the community is provided. It begins by asking the reader to perform a self-assessment to determine personal assets. The text then explores ways to map one's community, to identify the needs, strengths, and powerful and positive people who make up the community.

Flora, C. B. "Innovations in Community Development." ***Rural Development News*** 21, no. 3 pp. 1-3, 12 (September 1997) no. 4 pp. 1-3 (Winter 1997-1998). Ames, IA: North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1997-1998. (ED 433 974)
Community development, with its connotations of outside experts focusing on economic development, is giving way to community building, which focuses on continual improvement and grassroots efforts. Needs assessment, which focuses on what is wrong with a community, is being replaced by asset mapping, which identifies opportunities by focusing on a community's assets. Approaches that consider community residents as clients needing outside institutional help are shifting to considering them as citizens who form partnerships based on what they have to offer.

Green, G. P., and Haines, A. ***Asset Building and Community Development***. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002.
Explores the history of the community development movement in the United States and in international settings. Using an asset-based approach that considers human, physical, social, financial, and environmental capital, the authors demonstrate how local organizations are better able to meet community needs than governmental programs or market strategies.

Guy, T.; Fuller, D.; and Pletsch, C. ***Asset Mapping: A Handbook***. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Rural Partnership, 2002. http://www.rural.gc.ca/conference/documents/mapping_e.phtml
Outlines three approaches: the Whole Assets Approach, which takes into account all the assets that are part of people's view of their immediate community; the Storytelling Approach, which produces pieces of social history that reveal hidden or dormant assets; and the Heritage Approach, which produces a picture of those physical features, natural or built, that make the community a special place.

Hocking, G. "Oxfam Great Britain and Sustainable Livelihoods in the UK." ***Community Development Journal*** 38, no. 3 (July 2003): 235-242.
Oxfam uses a sustainable livelihoods framework to guide its antipoverty programs. They systematically analyze a community's asset base—human, financial, physical, natural/public, and social—in order to understand the starting point of the people whose livelihoods they aim to strengthen.

King, B. S., and Hustedde, R. "Strengthening Civic Engagement in Community Decision-Making." ***Rural South: Preparing for the Challenges of the 21st Century***, no. 19. Mississippi State, MS: Southern Rural Development Center, May 2001. (ED 455 080) http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/king.pdf
Two approaches to citizen engagement are asset mapping, in which communities focus on their strengths and resources instead of problems and deficiencies, and systems thinking, which considers how the interdependence of issues affects whole systems.

Kretzmann, J. P. and McKnight, J. L. ***Building Communities from the Inside Out***. Evanston, IL: Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University, 1993.
This guide by the creators of asset-based community development summarizes lessons learned by studying successful community-building initiatives in hundreds of neighborhoods across the United States. It outlines what local communities can do to start their own journey down the path of asset-based development.

Mathie, A., and Cunningham, G. ***From Clients to Citizens: Asset-based Community Development as a Strategy for Community-driven Development. Occasional Paper Series, no. 4***. Antigonish, Nova Scotia: St Francis Xavier University, 2002. http://www.stfx.ca/academic/dev-studies/pages/Occ%20paper2002.htm
Examines how ABCD reflects recent trends in or could benefit from insights from the following: theory and practice of appreciative inquiry; the concept of social capital as an asset for community development; the theory of community economic development, such as the sustainable livelihoods approach; lessons learned from 2 decades of international development in the participatory paradigm; and theory and practice of building active citizenship engagement and a stronger civil society.

Roberts, S.; Dedrick, A.; and Mitchell, G. ***Westlawn Keys to Community. Project Report***. Spruce Grove, Alberta: Community Building Resources, 1998. (ED 423 378)
A community development agency in Edmonton, Alberta, worked with students using the ABCD approach. Focus was on the discovery, connection, and mobilization of the students' assets and gifts and connecting these with those of people and groups in the communities.

Roehlkepartain, E. C. ***An Asset Approach to Positive Community Change***. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2001. (ED 462 461)
Principles to guide community asset-building efforts include strengths versus risks or deficits, relationships versus programs, engagement versus services, and long-term versus quick fix. Communities can organize their asset-building efforts by taking a bubble-up approach, linking existing efforts, creating community-wide coalitions, and engaging partners.

Sharpe, P. A.; Greany, M. L.; Lee, P. R.; and Royce, S. W. "Assets-Oriented Community Assessment." ***Public Health Reports*** 115, nos. 2-3 (March-June 2000): 205-211.
Contends that Healthy Communities initiatives are better served by assets-oriented assessment methods than by problem-focused or needs-based approaches. Discusses methods and challenges of conducting assets-oriented community assessment.

Strickland, R. "Nurturing a New Mental Model." ***Health Forum Journal*** 43, no. 1 (January-February 2000): 43, 46, 51.
Focuses on the lessons learned in ABCD, including relationship building, patience and commitment, and the importance of continuous learning.

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